

LEXICAL GAPS IN O‘TKIR HOSHIMOV’S “BETWEEN TWO DOORS” AND THEIR CHALLENGES FOR NON-NATIVE READERS

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Abstract. *This article explores lexical gaps in O‘tkir Hoshimov’s novel “Between Two Doors”. It analyzes how culturally specific terms, Soviet-era vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and kinship terms create difficulties for non-native readers. The study shows that these gaps arise due to cultural and linguistic differences, as many Uzbek concepts do not have direct equivalents in other languages. The article also suggests practical strategies such as descriptive translation, cultural equivalence, and the use of annotations and glossaries to overcome these challenges. Overall, the research highlights the importance of preserving cultural meaning while making the text accessible to a wider audience.*

Keywords. *lexical gaps, cultural terms, translation, Uzbek literature, idioms, kinship terms, Soviet vocabulary*

Introduction. Literary texts are not only linguistic structures but also cultural representations of a nation’s history. Traditions, and social values. According to Nida (1964), language is deeply embedded in culture, and meaning cannot be fully understood without cultural context. O‘tkir Hoshimov’s novel “Between Two Doors” is considered one of the most significant works of Uzbek realistic literature, as it reflects the everyday life, emotional experiences, and social relations of Uzbek society during the Soviet period. However, due to its strong cultural embedding, the novel contains numerous lexical items that are deeply rooted in Uzbek culture. For non-native readers, especially those who are unfamiliar with Uzbek traditions and historical background, these lexical items create difficulties in understanding the text fully. These difficulties are known as lexical gaps, which occur when a specific word or concept in the source language has no direct equivalent in the target language (Baker, 2018).

Cultural realities in the novel. One of the most prominent sources of lexical gaps in the novel is the presence of culturally specific terms that describe Uzbek social life and traditions. Words such as *mahalla*, *oqsoqol*, *hashar*, *kelin salom* and *fatiha* represent social institutions and cultural practices that are unique to Uzbek society. As Newmark (1988) explains, culture-specific items often resist direct translation because they are deeply rooted in the source culture. For instance, *mahalla* refers not only to a neighborhood but also to a traditional self-governing community structure that plays an important role in social organization. Similarly, *hashar* describes a collective form of voluntary community work, which has no exact equivalent in many other cultures. These terms carry deep cultural meaning, and their translation often requires explanatory descriptions rather than simple word-for-word equivalents. As a result, foreign readers may struggle to fully grasp the cultural significance embedded in these expressions.

Soviet-era administrative terms. Another important category of lexical gaps in the novel is related to Soviet-era administrative and political terminology. Words such as *kolkhoz*, *raykom*, *partkom*, and *front* are frequently used in the narrative to reflect the socio-political environment of that historical period. These terms refer to specific

institutions of the Soviet system, such as collective farms and party committees, which may not exist in the cultural or political experience of non-native readers. According to Bassnett (2002), historical and institutional terms often require additional contextualization in translation because they are tied to specific socio-political systems. Without sufficient historical knowledge of the Soviet Union, readers may find these terms confusing or difficult to interpret. Therefore, these lexical items require additional contextual explanation to ensure proper understanding of the text.

Idiomatic and emotional expressions. O‘tkir Hoshimov’s writing style is highly expressive and rich in idiomatic language, which also contributes to lexical gaps. The author frequently uses emotionally charged expressions such as “his heart was broken,” “his soul was wounded,” and “his eyes filled with tears.” While these expressions are meaningful in Uzbek and convey deep emotional states, their literal translation into other languages may not fully capture the same emotional intensity. Idioms are culturally bound, and their meanings often go beyond the literal interpretation of words. Therefore, non-native readers may find it difficult to understand the intended emotional depth unless these expressions are properly adapted or explained in translation.

Kinship and social terms. The Uzbek language has a highly detailed system of kinship terms that distinguish between different family relationships more precisely than many other languages. In the novel, terms such as *aka* (older brother), *amaki* (uncle from father’s side), *xola* (maternal aunt) and *quda* (in-law relationship between families) are commonly used. These distinctions reflect the importance of family structure in Uzbek culture. However, in many other languages, such as English, these relationships are expressed with more general terms like “uncle” or “aunt”, which leads to a loss of specificity and cultural meaning. This creates layer of lexical gap for non-native readers.

Causes of lexical gaps. The existence of lexical gaps in “Between Two Doors” can be explained by several linguistic and cultural factors. First, the novel is deeply rooted in Uzbek cultural identity, which includes traditions, social norms, and values that are not universally shared (Nida, 1964). Second, the Soviet historical context introduces institutional vocabulary that may not exist in other cultural systems (Bassnett, 2002). Third, the author’s use of idiomatic and metaphorical language adds emotional richness to the text but increases the difficulty of translation (Baker, 2018). Finally, many Uzbek cultural concepts simply do not have direct equivalents in other languages, which makes literal translation impossible without losing meaning.

Solutions to overcome lexical gaps. To address lexical gaps in translation and interpretation, several strategies can be applied. One effective approach is descriptive translation, where culturally specific terms are explained rather than directly translated. For example, *hashar* can be described as “a form of collective voluntary community work”. Another approach is cultural equivalence, where the closest functional meaning is used, such as translating *oqsoqol* as “village elder”. Additionally, the use of footnotes and annotations can help readers understand unfamiliar terms without interrupting the flow of the text. A glossary of cultural terms at the end of the book can also serve as a useful reference tool. Baker (2018) also highlights the importance of glossaries, which help readers understand culture-bound terms. Finally, adaptation techniques can be applied, especially in simplified versions of the text, to make it more accessible to foreign readers while preserving the original meaning.

In conclusion, O‘tkir Hoshimov’s “Between Two Doors” is culturally rich literary work that contains numerous lexical gaps due to its deep connection with Uzbek traditions, history, and social life. These lexical gaps present significant challenges for non-native readers, as many of the terms and expressions do not have direct equivalents in other languages. However, these challenges can be effectively addressed through translation strategies such as descriptive translation, cultural equivalence, annotation, and glossaries. By applying these methods, the cultural richness of the novel can be preserved while making it more accessible to an international audience.

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